

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY NEA/AFN:LRMURRAYJR:SKG

APPROVED BY NEA:ALATHERTONJR

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 026599

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TS

SUBJECT: TUNISIAN AMBASSADOR HEDDA'S CALL ON ASST.SECRETARY
ATHERTON, JANUARY 30

1. AMBASSADOR HEDDA CALLED ON ASSTSECY ATHERTON ON JAN-
UARY 30 FOR GENERAL TOUR D'HORIZON BEFORE AMBASSADOR
RETURNS FOR CONSULTATIONS IN TUNIS WEEK OF FEBRUARY 2.
ISSUES DISCUSSED WERE THE FOLLOWING:

2.FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTI'S INVITATION FOR US DELE-
GATION TO ATTEND CELEBRATION OF TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF
TUNISIAN INDEPENDENCE:

ATHERTON SAID THAT WE HAD JUST RECEIVED EMBASSY'S NOTE
TRANSMITTING FOREIGN MINISTER'S INVITATION, AND THAT WE
WOULD HOPE TO SEND A HIGH-LEVEL DELEGATION TO ATTEND THIS
IMPORTANT EVENT. WE OBVIOUSLY HAVE NOT HAD TIME TO COME
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TO ANY CONCLUSION AS TO COMPOSITION OF OUR DELEGATION, BUT

WOULD BEGIN LOOKING INTO MATTER ON URGENT BASIS, IN VIEW
SHORT TIME REMAINING BETWEEN NOW AND MARCH 19. ATHERTON
ASKED AMBASSADOR WHAT OTHER COUNTRIES HAD BEEN INVITED,
AND NAMES OF REPRESENTATIVES WHO MIGHT ATTEND. AMBASSADOR
REPLIED HE DID NOT HAVE FULL INFORMATION BUT WOULD ENDEAVOR

TO FIND OUT DURING CONSULTATIONS AND REPORT BACK TO
DEPARTMENT UPON HIS RETURN TO WASHINGTON WEEK OF FEBRUARY

3. SECRETARY'S MOSCOW VISIT:

IN RESPONSE TO AMBASSADOR'S INQUIRY ABOUT RESULTS OF
MOSCOW VISIT, ATHERTON REPLIED THAT PRINCIPAL DISCUSSIONS
WERE ON SALT, AS HEDDA COMMENTED WAS HIS UNDERSTANDING
FROM PRESS REPORTS. ATHERTON SAID THAT SECRETARY ALSO
MADE CLEAR U.S. POSITION ON SOVIET INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA.
ATHERTON SUGGESTED THAT AMBASSADOR READ SECRETARY'S
STATEMENT MADE BEFORE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
ON AFRICA ON JANUARY 29 FOR COMPLETE AND AUTHORITATIVE
EXPRESSION OF CURRENT U.S. VIEWS ON ANGOLA. ATHERTON
TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT SECRETARY AND FOREIGN MINISTER
GROMYKO HELD BRIEF EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON MIDDLE EAST. BOTH
SIDES PRESENTED KNOWN POSITIONS, AND NO NEW GROUND WAS
BROKEN.

4. RABIN VISIT:

PRIME MINISTER RABIN'S VISIT HAS BEEN USEFUL, AND SERVED
AS OPPORTUNITY FOR FULL EXCHANGE OF U.S. AND ISRAELI
VIEWS ON MIDDLE EAST. AS WE HAD EXPECTED, NO DECISIONS
WERE REACHED DURING RABIN'S VISIT. WE KNEW BEFOREHAND
THAT HE WAS NOT EMPOWERED TO MAKE ANY COMMITMENTS, AND
OUR OBJECTIVE WAS TO PUT IN CLEAREST TERMS U.S. THINKING
ON MIDDLE EAST FOR THE PRIME MINISTER TO TAKE BACK TO HIS
GOVERNMENT. U.S. POSITION EXPLAINED TO RABIN IS WELL
KNOWN, AND HAS BEEN FULLY PRESENTED IN NUMEROUS OFFICIAL
PUBLIC STATEMENTS WHICH AMBASSADOR HAS SEEN. BRIEFLY,
U.S. EMPHASIZED IN TALKS THA; IT IS IMPORTANT MATTERS NOT
BE ALLOWED TO STAND STILL, AND THAT FORWARD MOVEMENT MUST
BE MAINTAINED. WE EXPLAINED THAT THIS COULD ONLY BE
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ACHIEVED IF ALL PARTIES IN DISPUTE CONTRIBUTE TO THIS
EFFORT, AND THAT THIS INCLUDES ISRAELIS AS WELL AS ARABS.
GIVEN THEIR OPPOSING POSITIONS, U.S. RECOMMENDS THERE IS
LITTLE CHANCE FOR SYRIAN-ISRAELI TALKS AT THE MOMENT,
BUT OTHER WAYS MUST BE FOUND TO MEET NEED FOR CONTINUED
DIALOGUE. ONE ALTERNATIVE DISCUSSED WAS POSSIBILITY
OF REOPENING GENEVA TALKS.

5. AMBASSADOR INQUIRED IF ONE COULD HOPE THAT U.S. WOULD PRESS AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE FOR RESOLUTION OF OBSTACLES WHICH NOW BLOCK REOPENING OF NEGOTIATIONS. ATHERTON REPLIED THAT IT IS TOO SOON TO SAY WHICH PATH WILL BE THE MOST FEASIBLE, BUT THE U.S. WILL CONTINUE TO PRESS AS HARD AS POSSIBLE TO BREAK THE CURRENT IMPASSE. WE HAVE NO ILLUSIONS, AND RECOGNIZE THAT SITUATION IS MORE PROGRESS MUST BE ACHIEVED THIS YEAR. PROGRESS MUST BE ACHIEVED THIS YEAR.

6. SPANISH SAHARA:

IN RESPONSE TO AMBASSADOR'S QUESTION, ATHERTON SAID U.S. IS CONCERNED OVER RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN SPANISH SAHARA AND HOPES THAT SITUATION CAN BE CONTAINED WITHOUT FURTHER DETERIORATION INTO OPEN HOSTILITIES WHICH WOULD BE A TRAGEDY. OUR POSITION IS TO ENCOURAGE ALL PARTIES TO REACH PEACEFUL SOLUTION WITHOUT INTERVENTION OF OUTSIDE INTERESTS. WE HAVE SUPPORTED THE UNGA RESOLUTION CALLING FOR PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT. WE ARE ENCOURAGED THAT DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS ARE ALREADY UNDER WAY, BUT WE RECOGNIZE DIFFICULT PROBLEM OF HOW WILL OF THE SAHARAN PEOPLE CAN BE DETERMINED. OUR ASSESSMENT IS THAT POLISARIO WILL CONTINUE TO CAUSE TROUBLE, BUT THAT THERE WILL BE NO EARLY OUTBREAK OF FULL HOSTILITIES. KING HASSAN'S PERSONAL EMISSARY, FORMER PRIME MINISTER LAMRANI, MET WITH SECRETARY KISSINGER JANUARY 29. LAMRANI PRESENTED FULL EXPLANATION OF KING'S VIEWS. SECRETARY EXPRESSED USG CONCERN, AND REAFFIRMED VALUE U.S. PLACES IN ITS LONG STANDING CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH MOROCCO. ATHERTON SAID SECRETARY ASSURED LAMRANI OF U.S. INTENTION TO CONTINUE ONGOING PROGRAMS OF ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO MOROCCO. ATHERTON NOTED THAT FORMAL PRESS STATEMENT TO CONFIDENTIAL

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THIS EFFECT WOULD BE ISSUED IN JANUARY 30 PRESS BRIEFING. AT SAME TIME, U.S. HOPES TO MAINTAIN NEW ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL TIES WITH ALGERIA.

7. AMBASSADOR HEDDA NOTED MOROCCAN SOURCES HAD INFORMED HIM OF CONCERN OVER DIFFICULTIES MOROCCO HAS EXPERIENCED IN MAKING ARMS PURCHASES IN U.S. ATHERTON AGREED THERE HAD BEEN SOME DELAYS IN MEETING MOROCCAN REQUESTS, BUT THAT THESE DIFFICULTIES WERE OF A PROCEDURAL RATHER THAN POLITICAL NATURE. THERE ARE SERIOUS PROBLEMS OF AVAILABILITY, BUT WE ARE TAKING FRESH LOOK TO SEE HOW THESE PROBLEMS CAN BE RESOLVED.

8. U.S.-TUNISIAN RELATIONS:

AMBASSADOR NOTED LONG-STANDING CLOSE U.S.-TUNISIAN RELATIONSHIP, AND EXPRESSED HOPE THAT U.S. CAN RECONSIDER TUNISIAN REQUESTS FOR INCREASED MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID IN VIEW OF RECENT EVENTS IN PORTUGAL, NORTH AFRICA, AND ANGOLA. THESE EVENTS HAVE CHANGED SITUATION, AMBASSADOR SAID, AND IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO VIEW TUNISIA IN FRAME OF REFERENCE USED IN PAST. HE ADDED THAT TUNISIA HAS MADE CONSCIOUS CHOICE OF ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL

ALIGNMENT WITH U.S. AND WEST. AS RESULT, TUNISIA ENSURED HOSTILITY OF LIBYAN AND ALGERIAN NEIGHBORS WHO HAVE CHOSEN OTHER PATH. TUNISIA'S SUCCESSES SERVE TO INCREASE NEIGHBORS' HOSTILITY, AND CONSEQUENTLY TUNISIA MUST BE EVEN MORE ATTENTIVE TO ITS DEFENSE NEEDS AND BROADER SECURITY INTERESTS. FAILURE OF TUNISIAN EXPERIMENT WOULD REPRESENT FAILURE AS WELL FOR FREE WORLD BECAUSE OF TUNISIA'S COMMITMENT AND TIES WITH U.S. AND EUROPE. ATHERTON EXPRESSED AGREEMENT WITH AMBASSADOR BUT NOTED DIFFICULTY IN OBTAINING INCREASES IN ASSISTANCE, BOTH ECONOMIC AND MILITARY. HE AGREED TO KEEP AMBASSADOR'S VIEWS IN MIND, AND THAT U.S. WOULD WATCH SITUATION CLOSELY. INGERSOLL

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